

Michigan

Michigan must embrace the future before it passes us by



Lyft launched in Ann Arbor in 2014, days after Uber, and a move to force both ridesharing services to comply with state regulations failed in City Council. Michigan must update the law to encourage services, strengthen the economy and serve residents' needs, the author argues. (Lyft)



By **Guest writer**

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*Bill Schuette is Michigan's attorney general. If you have a guest column to share, email Opinion Curator **Dan Hawkins**. And be sure to check out our **guidelines for submission**.*

By Michigan Attorney General Bill Schuette

Michigan is world-famous as the home for innovators in the automobile and transportation industry. The Motor City had America's first mile of paved highway and has become the proving ground for automobile technology that is changing the way we live.

Embracing new technologies that offer families safe and efficient choices for getting to work or shopping (or even football practice) is key to growing Michigan's economy and its reputation as leader in the automotive world.

In the past few years, ridesharing apps, such as Uber and Lyft, have sparked a revolution in transportation options across the globe. Innovators saw a need for more convenient, affordable and reliable transportation.

The ease and convenience of ridesharing has created an option for those that cannot afford a car, the insurance, gas and maintenance associated with ownership. Additional benefits are less congested roads, fuel savings and better air quality.

Ridesharing also offers an opportunity to make the roads safer by allowing people to enjoy a night on the town without getting behind the wheel on the way home. Already, statistics have shown an increase for ride requests during weekend and late night hours.

And, the embrace of this technology has created a job market for thousands of drivers who benefit from full- or part-time work.

Currently, a package of bills is under consideration in the Michigan Legislature, including Rep. Tim Kelly's **House Bill 4637**. Combined and passed into law, this package of bills will create a framework to ensure Michigan residents have multiple safe options to get from Point A to Point B.

Cutting-edge transportation technology, like many other rapidly changing industries that are making our lives easier, does not fit into the decades-old regulation model created before such advances existed. But to keep pace with rest of the world, Michigan must move quickly to embrace change while protecting its citizens.

The Legislature is considering new laws to accomplish just that. Michigan's **most recent laws** regulating personal for-hire transportation were created more than 25 years ago, long before the internet was a household necessity or smartphones were as common as car keys in your pocket. Back then, the idea that you could use a hand-held device to summon a car was something you might have seen in a science-fiction movie, but not in real life.

By embracing this new technology, not only do we give Michigan families more transportation options in our increasingly busy lives, but we will be a world leader in technology and job growth.

New laws embracing ridesharing are just a first. Autonomous cars are getting closer to reality, with many variations being tested worldwide. For example, at MCity in Ann Arbor, the University of Michigan is testing autonomous technology, and Kettering University has harnessed the power of their student engineers to create and build the next generation of automotive technology. To keep us moving forward, the Legislature recently passed laws that encourage even broader autonomous testing to take place at the new Willow Run test tracks.

I am excited about Michigan driving more rapidly into the 21st century. By embracing new transportation technology, with a focus on safety and access, we can achieve a win-win for Michigan's families by increasing transportation options and securing our future as a center of automotive innovation and job creation.

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